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HOW TO BECOME A CATHOLIC.

MANY persons who attend Catholic services, impressed with what they see and hear, feel a desire to become members of the Catholic Church, or at all events to obtain more information about it, so as to be able better to decide whether they ought to join it or not.

Is it very difficult to become a Catholic?

By no means. Make known your desire to some priest, and he will explain to you all that is necessary.

But if I address myself to a priest, will he not drag me into his Church, whether I like it or not, whereas perhaps on closer acquaintance I shall not wish to join it?

Not for the world would he dream of trying to make you a Catholic against your will. On the contrary, even if you were anxious to be received then and there, you would find that the priest would tell you to wait. He would tell you that it was first of all necessary for you to receive a course of instruction, so that you might come to understand what the Catholic Church teaches and practises. Only when he was satisfied that you really understood what you were about, and

that you were firmly determined to embrace the Catholic faith in the belief that it is the only true one, would he consent to receive you.

What then will he propose to do, if I tell him I should like to become a Catholic?

He will ask you to mention the day of the week and the hour at which you can come to him for instruction in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church; and he will then make an appointment with you for that purpose. During the course of your instruction he will explain to you all the great truths revealed by God, which every Christian is bound to know and to believe; he will unfold to you the moral law contained in the commandments of God; he will teach you about prayer and the sacraments, the means appointed by God to enable you to keep the law. He will tell you the vices which you must avoid, and the virtues which you must practise, if you desire to save your soul; and he will enlighten you with regard to the services, the rites and ceremonies, and the various religious usages of the Catholic religion. He will answer any questions you may put, and will endeavour to clear up any difficulties which you may have.

And when he has done all this, what will he do next?

He will ask you whether, knowing what you know of the Catholic faith, you wish to embrace it? and if you say, "Yes, I do," he will at last admit you to the One Fold of the One Shepherd.

But how shall I find a priest who will do all this for me?

Very easily. Priests are only too anxious to give persons drawn to the Catholic Church as much and as kind help as lies in their power. If then you have a Catholic friend you might ask him or her to take you to some priest for a talk on the matter. Or if you do not know any Catholics, write a note to some priest whom you have seen or heard, or call at his house and ask for him; or if you see him about, go up and speak to him: he will not take it as an intrusion. If you have no particular priest in mind, ask at the door for any one: say 'Can I speak to one of the Fathers?' and, if at home and disengaged, he will come.

But what shall I say to him? How shall I make the start?

You need not feel any anxiety about starting the conversation. You might take this paper with you and say it had encouraged you to ask for him; or you might say that you had some thoughts of becoming a Catholic, and would like to know something more about the Catholic Church.

Suppose I do not exactly want to become a Catholic, but have been told certain things about Catholics, and wish to hear what a Catholic priest has to say in answer to them. Would he think me intruding if I called merely to ask him this?

Certainly not: he would be most pleased to give

you all the explanation in his power. And never fear lest he should consider some of the questions offensive. For instance, you might wish to know if it is true that Catholics do not believe in Christ, or worship images, or that priests give leave to commit sins for fixed payments. Ask such questions by all means. He will willingly explain matters to you, and, instead of his being offended with you, it will end by you both having a hearty laugh over the absurdity of the popular misconceptions.

One last question I should like to ask: If I call on a priest in this way, will he insist on having my name and address, so that he can come after me?

He certainly will not. He will leave you free to give them or not as you like best. Do not give them, if you prefer to be unknown to him till you know him better.

If God has put the thought of becoming a Catholic into your heart, do not let the fear of what anyone may think, or say, or do, deter you from following it up.

Remember the words of our Lord, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"